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ABSTRACT

This paper asks what it means to construct classroom practice so that the expertise of students and teacher is called forth to respond to the challenge of meeting students' needs for English in the world and for the world. The paper suggests a model and metaphor of the classroom as an atelier--a place of artisanal practice in which the expertise of both students and teacher is acknowledged and deliberately engaged. To see what this is like, the paper offers the stories those in the conference group (i.e., the authors) told each other as they explored their experiences as teachers and learners. Each case illustrates how teachers, students, or members of the community variously take the roles of apprentices or experts. Each one also describes activities which engage students and teachers in passionate, personal, and critical ways of interacting with the world with and through language. The atelier/classroom is the site for the arts of discourse, that is the language arts. English curriculum should be a place for concentration on the language and discourse practices of contexts beyond the classroom. Contains 13 notes. (NKA)

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Subtheme 3:
Models and Metaphors For English Studies

The English Classroom as an Atelier--A Place For Promoting Personal, Passionate, and Critical Cognition.

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What does it mean to construct classroom practice so that the expertise of students and teacher is called forth to respond to the challenge of meeting students' needs for English in the world and for the world? The authors suggest a model and metaphor of the classroom as an atelier--a place of artisanal practice in which the expertise of both students and teacher is acknowledged and deliberately engaged.

Diary note:
NYU July 1995
IFTE Conference

Spent the morning talking with our working group--David, Viv, Pat and Claire. We are in the strand Metaphors and Meanings. After opening discussions with presentations from Bill Green and Gunther Kress and weighed down with papers from strand participants, we settled in to tease out our topic so we could report to the group after lunch. Our topic:

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English in the World.

Well, what do we make of this? Does it mean English and the World? English for the World? English as a World Language? World Englishes? What is it about? Our students and their language/s. Our students and English? Our students and the world of work, of community, of family? What about the English classroom in all this? more later.

Diary note:
Next day

Good discussion. We are all from different countries and teach and do research in different situations--primary , secondary, middle school, community college and university. It was a mini- workshop (we like the term atelier better--it suggests a notion of recognized expertise and apprenticeship. It's a term CW suggested as she described visiting the atelier of the sculptor Brancusi) and great for sharing our knowledge, experience, understanding and questions. Back to the idea of atelier--we were all both experts and apprentices at some time during the discussion. We have settled on a way of pulling all our understandings and experiences together--we have decided to collaborate as writers and thinkers to write up our conversation.

Bill Green and Gunther Kress (in the initial papers distributed to the Models and Metaphors for English Studies group) challenged the participants to rethink English curriculum. Kress asked of English: "What should it be for ?" He posed two central issues: "the role of English in the production of a culture of innovation; and the possibilities of humans confident in the face of change and able to treat difference as the central resource for innovation." Green, quoting Derrida, reminded the group that, "Metaphor is never innocent. It orients and fixes results." (1) With these thoughts to frame the discussion, our small group (a sub-group of the strand and given the topic "English and the world") asked: How might we think about the idea of English and the world? And how can we think about this in relation to the ideas of metaphors which help us reflect on teaching English, on the needs of all our students and on what we try to achieve in our English classes?

Out of a vigorous brainstorming session, we described four ways of conceptualizing English and the world: 1. English as a world language; 2. English and the impact of social, political, economic and technological constraints and changes (such as youth unemployment); 3. English and the other discourses of the world--work, community, family, social or cultural groups; and 4. English as a particular site for activity. From this initial framing of the issues relating to the topic English and the world, we began to focus more closely on ideas three and four, while keeping in mind the parameters set by ideas one and two.

First we considered English as a world language, asking questions about its relationship to other languages and about its role as a dominant cultural and imperialist tool--not only in emerging economies but in western established societies. The issues of standard and non-standard English and the status of standard English in relation to other dialects are matters of concern to all teachers.

Our discussion thus turned to the role and responsibility of the English teacher in understanding the cultural ideology of English. Alastair Pennycook has written of what he calls "the cultural politics of English as an international language." In a book of the same name, he explores the impact of the global spread of English and the role of English language teachers and teaching in relation to the "global discourses of capitalism, democracy, education, development . . ." (2) He terms this spread of English and its cultural and political implications "the worldliness of English" (p. 6). Pennycook asserts that English has become the language of power, prestige, and status and has a quite specific gatekeeper role in the economic and political contexts of many countries. His words (phrased more eloquently than our exploratory discourse) might have been captured from our conversation over four days:

> As someone who watches the shifts and changes in the world with interest and as someone who is often deeply disturbed and angered by what I see around me--the deaths of children, the poverty and starvation, the pointless consumption and thoughtless pollution, the discriminations against people because of their color, their language, their gender, their sexual orientation, their culture, their class--I find questions around local and global inequalities constantly return. And, over the years I have become increasingly sure that these are connected, that it is essential for me politically and morally, to work out the relationships between my work as an English teacher and what I see around me in the world (Pennycook, pp. 3-4).

Much of our discussion pivoted on this issue. Thus when we traversed related key topics, we dealt with the issue of the discourses of English and of schooled language and literacy and what Street and Street have called "the pedagogization of literacy"--the limited notions of teaching and learning literacy grounded in the institutional structures of schools and schooling (although not limited to school contexts or artifacts) which exclude other literacies or ways of using literacy. (3)

Of global issues

Our discussions led us to examine the English curriculum and the English teacher in relation to the economy--to changes both technological and demographic. We wanted to traverse the wider global issues which transform the world for our students, for example the threat not only of unemployment but of underemployment, and of the evolution of a permanent underclass. We are all aware of the changing patterns of work and leisure which our students are already experiencing and which are likely to demand very different skills and capabilities for every individual. The question of whether what is currently intended to engage students in schools in subject English is relevant to their lives and to how they perceive their futures pressed in on us. What knowledge, language skills, and other cultural capital do they need to operate in society? Quite simply, but knowing the complexities in answering, we asked can English teachers deliver?

Integral to this topic was our understanding whether and how English curriculum could function as a site where it ought to be possible to break down the barriers between the

discourse of the school (or other educational institution) and the discourses of the world, of work, of community, of particular situations and issues (e.g. AIDS) which have an impact on students.

So we came to talk of English as a site for allowing students the space to strengthen their individual senses of self because such space can allow for bridges to be created between the discourse of their lives and the discourse practices of other contexts. We talked of ways of acknowledging in classroom practice the way the world impacts on our students and thus as teachers being able to make something of that by focusing on English and the world in particular ways.

We asked a series of questions such as: How can we break down the school walls? How can we respond to the world as experienced by students? Are the claims for English too grandiose? After all it is but one subject in the curriculum. What can the English teacher do when it is recognized that two-fifths of the population is likely not to have permanent work ? What are we as members of the other three-fifths doing attempting to ameliorate the potential condition of the two-fifths?

This we acknowledged is problematic because the teacher in a sense embodies the curriculum. How can we walk alongside our students and let them share in setting the agenda and allow their voices and their experience to be an instrumental part of the expertise and design in classroom practice? How do we work toward a curriculum and practice that allows students to evolve an understanding and knowing, a way of representing the world, a way of arriving at a mental map of themselves in relation to other institutions, social, cultural and historical forces and structures?

We debated and reflected, interspersing our theorizing with examples from our own classes. What sort of English do we see as necessary? What metaphor do we seek to guide our theorizing of our own practice? What does our classroom feel like? What goes on there in terms of English and the world, English in the world, and in terms of meeting our students' needs for English for the world? What we found ourselves doing--and this is inevitable when teachers get together--was translating our questions into examples from our own teaching; Patrick working with teacher education students and also teaching poetry in an elementary class; Viv creating a school/community storytelling program as part of English and Drama; Claire teaching first year university students. We were all tellers of tales and thus "experts" of our own situations one minute and apprentices "observing," as it were, our colleagues "practices" the next--asking questions, seeking further reflections, demanding analysis, pushing for clarification. Out of all this not only did we adopt a metaphor to guide our discussion but we refocused on what we feel is crucial in our teaching: the intention to engage students in what we have labeled a passionate, personal and critical cognition.

Passionate, personal, critical cognition

As English teachers, we have generally described what we do as nurturing the affective. However, we see as richly cognitive the kind of necessary educating we are talking of now as being needed in current global political, economic and social circumstances. Thus our

group argued that to continue to offer a perception of English as primarily an expressive and affective subject reinforces a version of English which denies the cognitive work of all we do with students. Rather, the group suggests, it is the strengths of English as a site for catalyzing the passionate and personal cognition that English teachers should emphasize. What exactly do we mean by the idea of a passionate, personal yet critical cognition? This is a cognition that is critically linked to the world in all its diversity. This is the cognition we should be developing and celebrating.

If the curriculum is one that deals primarily with reading and critiquing texts, one of the group trenchantly suggested, then it can only be a reading curriculum. Unless there is a deliberate pedagogy of performance and practice evolving from the language of all classroom participants, then the rich possibilities of language and discourse will not have not been called forth. Thus we asserted: in this site, the English class, discourse and language is the raw material. Language as a tool is everybody's possession. In this everybody is something of an expert. But at the same time, we are all constantly apprentices listening to and responding to the language and ideas of others. Language is individually and collectively "owned" or possessed. So how can subject English and its practices help students to own language? How can the English classroom be the site for the language of everyday life, the language for organizing, for relating, for making, producing, and designing and much more?

Again Pennycook says succinctly what we would argue when he describes "a critical pedagogy of English in the world"; that is, ". . . an attempt to enable students to write (speak, read, listen) back" (p. 311). The significant notion here is that of the "insurgent voice"--"voices that speak in opposition to the local and global discourses that limit and produce the possibilities that frame our students "lives" (p 311).

For Pennycook the notion of voice has a tripartite construction in which language, discourse, and subjectivity provide the elements for activity. Thus students can be engaged in understanding and dealing with the discourse of texts and contexts of all kinds (in Pennycook's phrase--discursive intervention); with acquiring the linguistic skills needed to access the knowledges of the world while appropriating language for themselves to meet their needs (linguistic action); and finally with processes which enable them to be participants in the world who have acknowledged histories, cultures and experiences of the world (exploring subjectivity). (4) As teachers we see ourselves not only opening up new experiences with texts, language and discourse but inviting students to bring their discourses and ways of talking about the world into the classroom.

What to make of all this? Was there a metaphor for what we were exploring? Claire commented that because we were conscious of the movement between the roles of expert and apprentice it suggested the artisan at work with apprentices. She described her visit some years before to the atelier of the French sculptor Brancusi--a place of models, experimental forms, of work in progress. In a way this is what goes on in the English classroom, where language and discourse is modeled, explored, experimented with and where writing, speaking, reading and all the other activities in English are work in progress.

To help ourselves sort this issue out, we each chose at least one example from our experience to describe to the group. In turn then we used each case as a means of teasing out some of the issues of critical practice in teaching --experiences where we were particularly aware of the elements of discursive intervention, linguistic skills and subjectivities being evoked and generated in our pedagogies. Importantly, we wanted to reflect on the roles of the expert and the apprentice and sharing of the responsibility for the making of a passionate, personal and critical knowledge of the world and its discourse.

The classroom as atelier

In the telling of our own tales, we saw English not only as a site for students' voices (as Pennycook has defined voice) but also as the site of a particular relationship of the teacher and student. Yes, the teacher had a role as a "critical English language educator" (Pennycook); but we wanted to add to this and acknowledge the roles of both teacher and student in a classroom where a passionate, personal and critical cognition was being fostered. To do this we sought a very particular metaphor which we felt would allow for the different expertises (involving discursive and linguistic skills, and the cultural, historical and personal frames of individual subjectivities) brought to the classroom by students and teacher. If metaphors are what we live by, then the metaphor which drives our teaching and learning practices is vitally important to the conduct of English curriculum. And if not to the conduct of the curriculum, then to the critical reflection on pedagogy in which teachers ought to be engaged.

Our conference group of four has thus evolved a model and metaphor of the classroom as atelier. In talking about the work of the English classroom--the classroom as a site which could operate as a bridge between the worlds of school and community--we wanted to find a metaphor which would help us reflect on the roles of teacher and students in making knowledge and in using language individually and together. In our discussion, we determined that the idea of the "atelier" enabled us to consider the way both teacher and students could at different times take the role of either the expert or the apprentice.

The word was chosen deliberately in preference to workshop. The term "workshop" we discarded as being somewhat obvious and now so accepted as a way of describing classroom practice that it has ceased to offer a metaphor which might prompt new reflection. We are aware that workshop is commonly held as a description or metaphor of a particular process for teaching in English classes. Often it has carried connotations of a rather benign and untrammeled pedagogy. We have deliberately moved to redefine that notion to take into account our notion of expertise which arises from individual experiences of the discourses and of the world.

Atelier--the artist's workshop--we feel, allows for notions of expertise--acknowledged and shared expertise between the expert craftsperson and apprentices. The classroom is seen as a place for artisanal activity. However, important to our understanding of the atelier--and the English Language Arts class as atelier--is the idea that the locus for expertise shifts according to activity or circumstance within the classroom. We want to argue that it is the dynamic shifting of expertise between teacher and students as part of the jointly constructed

activities of the classroom which is important and must be allowed for.

The atelier metaphor raises immediately some obvious questions. What are we making? What are the materials we work with and on? And with what tools? Our answers to these questions may serve only the stories we tell, though we hope through the telling such instances will multiply and the metaphor will fruit. To answer the last question first: our tools are our language (not necessarily only verbal), the language we use as an extension of ourselves, as we act through language, work on and with people through language. It is ourselves we extend. This language is our personal possession, one we recall and predict with, one we extend and refine in use. This language is not a transparent tool in that it points to a commonly held reality; it is in fact imbued with our feeling and thinking; our experience, our reality is very much in it. We rely very much on the community of other users who afford us their listening, reading, and viewing, and their responses. And because we participate in a common humanity, our language is not uniquely ours, but both public and private, and integrally linked to social and cultural practices in and outside the classroom. We find ourselves and our language in our speaking, in the reading we do, and in the writing we produce for ourselves and others.

Our argument here is that our notion of the classroom as atelier invites people to bring in and work with their language, rather than store it in a locker on entering the school, to be picked up on the way out. What are the materials we students and teachers work with and on? We would say experiences; lived, read, first- and second-hand; questions, wonderings, fears; what we know and want to know about our world, our cultures, what we believe we need to know in order to manage our lives and tend our hopes. And what we produce are narratives, explanations, poems, further questions and perplexities, recastings, and actions: reports, protests, persuasions, celebrations.

So given our notion of classroom as atelier, it is not surprising that expertise is shared, that discipline--concerted effort--comes from ownership and engagement, that feedback is ongoing, and assessment is sought rather than imposed. All this sounds wonderfully utopian in the face of our large question, "What about English and the world?"

What the atelier enables is an assumption of responsibility by the artisan within community of purpose, dependence and inter-dependence. The teacher prepares the work area, provides working materials, enables the coming together and the exchange, provides information and feedback when it is sought, urges and encourages, always watchful not to usurp the right of co-artisans to exercise judgment. So community, worldly concerns, are not filtered out or narrowed and abstracted. They enter with each and every participant.

What does this look like in practice? To illustrate our position we have chosen to write the stories we told each other as we explored our experiences as teachers and learners. Patrick offers two instances from two different classrooms; Viv presents a whole school example, and Claire draws from a specialized course at the post-secondary level. Each case we suggest illustrates how teachers, students or members of the community variously take the roles of apprentices or experts. Each one also describes activities which engages students and teachers in passionate, personal and critical ways of engaging with the world with and

through language.

Pat's Stories
(Story one)

Twenty-eight 11-year olds in a multi-lingual classroom read a short story with the ending (about 10 lines of print)left out. They hear the story twice and are challenged by the teacher to write an ending of their own about the same length. The challenge is phrased as writing the kind of ending where it is hard to tell where the original writer ends and the new author begins. The word "seamless" is introduced. The pupils start writing almost immediately, and are asked to complete the task at home.

Two elements are at play here. There is the "game" element; nothing substantive is at risk, the rules are all up front: you know what you need to do and you are the best judge of what is working and isn't, and when it is a good time to stop. There is a sense of ownership: your sense of what is appropriate or fitting is called on; as storytellers, everyone can claim some degree of expertise.

The following day, in groups of four to six, the pupils read each other's endings, discuss what works and what doesn't, and decide how they might combine efforts to compose the group's ending. That ending is now presented by each group to the whole class, with each group providing explanations for the choices they made and receiving feedback. There is a genuine curiosity in the class about each group's ending and about the reasons for their choices. As they present, several members of the class recognize choices they themselves considered, but which had to give way to the weight of the group's decision. Thus some minority opinions are validated by others. There is an absence of competition; they genuinely celebrate each other's endings. When they are presented with the original ending, they believe their endings were far more creative.

This is not an instance of mere egocentrism. They have rewritten the story in terms of what they know. They can know the mother, the father, and the son in the story only in terms of their understandings of mothers, fathers, and sons and their interrelationships. They can understand anger, deprivation, and injustice only in terms of their constructions of such states. Their endings, they believe, are far more "fitting." In trying to maintain seamlessness, they have taken on the voice of the narrator, and even taken account of, as far as they can know, the prevailing social mores. "The woman could not have walked out on her husband," says one girl, refusing to allow the preferred option. "They did not have such things as Women's Shelters; and besides, you just couldn't leave your family." At the same time, they became aware of the constructedness of stories; that things are so only because the writer made them seem so, that other options were present.

As they write, and read, and talk, they act entirely in terms of what they think needs to be done to meet the challenge; their attention is not on what the teacher might prefer as an ending; particularly since she is already privy to the original version. They themselves are the judges of success and failure. They need to look to no one other themselves, their co-artisans, to legitimate what they have done. As we listen to their discussions, we can see

that it is their sense of what counts as story that is being drawn on. They ask whether such and such actions are consistent with the characters they have drawn; whether it wouldn't be more appropriate to use dialogue, as the original author has, to relate what is happening. There is something inevitable in the sequence of events, part of a pattern yet it must come as a surprise to readers. Not exactly their phrasing, but certainly the gist of quick, random, and seemingly disregarded (by the group) observations.

So what have they done? They have joined their readings of a literary narrative to compose an ending; they have become aware of the various possibilities their coworkers imagine for this story; they have recognized and made the kinds of semantic choices writers make in order to win readers to their versions of a story. And most noticeably, they have not felt the need to turn to an adult, and in their eyes more sophisticated, interpreter to validate their choices.

(Story two)

What if students are much older, more experienced language users and makers? The group I have in mind are graduate students in a Faculty of Education, largely part-time students, employed full- time as primary and secondary school teachers. The variety of academic texts, and the gap between those texts and their ordinary discourse are a large hindrance to students realizing any degree of autonomy as readers and writers. It is difficult to find oneself (that is, draw on one's own reflections and experiences as contextually valid and relevant)in unfamiliar discourse and genres. One hopes, as in a foreign country, to stay long enough and fraternize with native speakers in order to participate more fully in the conversations around one. Until then one is a spectator looking in; or to borrow Ann Freadman's (5) analogy regarding discoursal activity as an exchange of shots in a tennis game with readers taking up and returning shots in a dialogic interchange, these graduate students were largely spectators, wanting to get onto the tennis court but unsure they could return any but the least intimidating shots.

My solution to such a situation is to have students plunge in, dive into the discourse without regard to the consequences--which apart from a failure to arrive at clear understanding are hardly disastrous when everyone else around you is floundering as well. One's own ways of using language and one's own experiences have somehow to enter into dialogue with the native speaker, return the tennis shot, and be prepared for a return volley (we may as well mix metaphors here).

The atelier was set up by asking students to read in advance the four or five articles or chapters of a book on a specific topic, and to identify five points, passages, issues, and/or difficulties which they could point to if someone who had not read it asked them what there was in that particular text that was worth noting or even problematical. They were also to find a quiet twenty minutes or so to write a response to those readings--"whatever floated to the top of their minds." When they arrived for the next class (a three-hour weekly session), they were to hand in their written responses, and get together in groups of five to discuss with each reading what five points they had found worth noting for each of the reading. As a result of that sharing they were to decide what points they as a group would report back in

plenary session about an hour from then.

As they began that process, it was clear that they were curious about each other's readings, about what they valued or found problematical and why. They were pleased that they held some points in common, and wondered about their differences. In different ways they were reconstituting the text in terms of their own experiences and needs. They could seek clarifications and confess misunderstandings. Inevitably they turned to anecdote (it's like when; I remember when; there was a boy in my class; don't you just love it when?), seemingly irrelevant at times, but in spiral fashion beginning to gather sense.

When they reported in plenary session (reporters took turns each week, and every three weeks or so, members moved around to form new groups), they reported both agreements and differences, raised questions, and were pleased to see some of the points they had made being proposed by other groups. When all five or six groups had reported, all there was time for was to hand out the next set of readings. More often than not, the discussions had gone right down to the wire. My own contribution to the class was limited usually to the comments I had made on their written responses, comments which established I had read their responses with interest and replies to specific questions. My major contribution was to find and circulate the readings that bore in a significant way on the topic set for the coming week. If any of those readings were irrelevant, I would soon find out.

The results of this approach were immediately apparent. Whereas I could expect in the past that a few members of the class had not completed the readings for that day, it was obvious now that everyone without exception had come prepared to present and talk about their five points. The articles and chapters were well marked. One of the students remarked how differently she read now that she was accountable for her reading to her peers. One can understand how much more tentatively students read when they know the preferred reading is the one held by the teacher and that all will be made known when the leader conducts the discussion. Students reported how though they were quite exhausted from a day's work, they approached the class with considerable excitement. They were anxious to confirm their understandings, raise questions, and relate discoveries.

As active members of the atelier, the students came to know one another quite early into the course. I had not noticed in earlier seminar-type sessions, this degree of free-wheeling discussion fueled entirely by the questions the readings had thrown up. There was little or no trace of speaking to display knowledge or to impose one's position on others. Moreover, readings from earlier sessions were being recalled and cited with a facility I had not seen formerly. Those texts had become familiar material; a degree of familiarity I myself had not developed simply because I had stayed out of the discussions (there was no changing the tendency on the part of students to advert to the presence of the teacher in the group and seek confirmation and approval). Time and time again I had to ask what particular page of what particular text they were talking about. I seemed to be the only one who didn't know and for good reason. I was the only one who hadn't worked with those texts in the ways they had.

In their transactions with those articles, they were reading now as active participants in

Freadman's tennis game, taking-up shots, rather than as passive spectators on the sidelines. I noticed also a steady increase in the length of their weekly written responses; somehow those twenty minute top-off-the-head reflections were uncovering connections and coherences that needed to be worked out at some length. Moreover, they were becoming more practiced at using disciplinary discourse, as a tool for their own exploration of issues. Bakhtin's (6) notion of "ventriloquation" comes to mind:

> The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (it is not, after all, out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words!), but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's concrete contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own (Bakhtin, 1981:293-94).

Their developing fluency, as speakers, readers, and writers was clearly evident in the quality of the final papers that were produced at the conclusion of these one-semester courses. One of the most pleasing instances of such "appropriation" came within a course entitled, "Trends and Issues in the Teaching of English," a course intended to introduce new students in the graduate program to some of the key readings and developments in the field. In order to draw students into a process of identifying current trends and issue, I suggest they write a paper that will serve as an appropriate entry in an *Encyclopedia of Education*, and entitled, *English 199-*. I also provide two samples of similar entries and suggest they look up others. The students regard the task as relevant and useful, particularly given the scope of the course: an introduction to issues that might direct their own inquiring in English.

I had taught this introductory course five years in a row, and each time, this particular task, seemingly sensible and manageable, generated considerable anxiety. At regular intervals, students would ask that I discuss exactly what it was I wanted. I would review my written description and suggest that what might help was an appropriate argument or an analogy to hang their account on. For instance, I might organize my account by speaking of developments in English as a movement from a conception of the subject as product to a conception of the subject as process, and so on. Most of the students were dissatisfied with the papers they submitted, saying they had made several starts, and despite extensions on the due date, were not sure that they had written the paper I had asked for.

When I proposed the paper to my current group, I expected to encounter a similar pattern of apprehension and requests for clarification in the following weeks. It didn't happen; the students fell right into the task; I received no requests for an extension on the deadline. The papers I received were some of the best I had seen in a while. One of the students, who had initially warned me that she had four incomplete courses on her record simply because she had yet to finish the final papers for those courses, proudly handed in her paper a week before the due date with the comment, "This paper actually wrote itself!" I believe she was recognizing a fluency in herself that she had hitherto not known, a fluency that was the outcome of having talked and written freely with others in dialogue with some demanding

texts, accountable to co-readers rather than to a seemingly more knowledgeable teacher. Her growing familiarity with the material of the course, the stuff of intensive weekly conversations, allowed her to appropriate the question posed for the final paper as her own; so that she was working out her answer rather than trying to approximate the ideal paper which, she believed with most students, existed in the teacher's head.

Viv's story
community school and community

The English Department at Woodway Park School and Community College has confronted the statutory requirements of the new U.K. National Curriculum by designing Key Stage plans of entitlements and experiences for all students. These plans include entitlement units which address the programmes of study (including texts from the prescribed lists), individual skills and reading programmes, and cross-curricular, expressive arts projects or experiences for each of Key Stage 3 (ages 11 to 14).

The Woodway Park Storytelling Festival takes place in the Autumn term of Year 8 each year. Based around work that takes place in the English classroom, festival events reach out to local primary schools, the community, interest groups within our school (such as Dance Club) and curriculum subjects in other years. The festival grew out of similar work by many English teachers, promoted and disseminated by the National Oracy Project. The organization of such experiences has been detailed very successfully elsewhere. Briefly, however, the main activities take place over two days. On the first day, we use a storyteller to work first with a mixed group of Art, Music, Dance, and Media students from all years. The storyteller tells a number of stories as an introduction. The students choose a story that engages them as a group and, over the next two days, work alongside their teachers towards a re-presentation of that story in performance at the end of the second day.

The storyteller then works with a group of Year 6 students in their primary schools. The aim of these sessions is to get the children to open up their own box of stories and to feel that this is (in and of itself) valuable. When the storyteller leaves their school, the Year 6 students continue to work towards this aim with their own teachers. On the afternoon of the first day, this storyteller session is repeated with Year 8 students.

Day two brings the primary and secondary students together with the storyteller and teachers in the morning and with a wider community group in the afternoon (bribed to come in with an "eat- as-you-tell" lunch). The afternoon ends with the re-presentation of the initial story by the mixed group in performance. Throughout the two days, Year 11 Media Studies (Photography) students have almost free access to any of the sessions with varying briefs: to tell the story of the (final) story; to tell the story of the process. Groups and events move around between schools, classrooms, libraries, darkrooms, and theatres. By the end of the project, the teachers involved have many colleagues but not many friends!

Some of the most fascinating aspects of the activities to observe are the interactions between the various participants: the child who tells a new version of a traditional story previously unheard of by the "storyteller"; a group of dancers of different ages picking their teacher's

brain to see how they can carry out a particular movement safely; an older adult who finds that her "friend's sister's" anecdote is actually part of a complex urban myth. In each case, there is a coming to an understanding about language.

This kind of project throws into sharp relief the metaphor of the "atelier" as the arena for learning and of different and changing conceptions of "artisanal" expertise. Initially, for example, one teacher may not have the confidence to lead in this context and this context may be created (in the early stages, at least) by an "expert" storyteller. As the project progresses, however, the balance and locus of expertise constantly shifts, as the participants re-make and re-present, sharpening and understanding their language tools by engaging with multiple experts--student/teacher: storyteller, dancer, photographer, visual artist, choreographer, etc.--and the expertise created by the context of the atelier itself.

Claire's story
A tale of writing at university:
the first year writing class as a bridge to the community

"It is helpful to remind ourselves that one of the things a university does is alter one's sense of geography. This journey is part of what defines the relation between the university and the rest of society", write Muchiri, Mulamba, Myers and Ndoloi. (7) In one way the altered "sense of geography" involved for students is quite real; they have moved from home, country, state, province, city to attend college. In another way, the "idea of an altered geography" is a metaphor for the awareness of self in relation to different spaces, contexts, discourses. But more than achieving a reflective awareness, students need to develop the skills to investigate and adopt a critical and interpretative stance to the contexts, language, texts and discourses they encounter within and outside the academy.

When first year BA students at University of South Australia enter the first class in the major in Professional Writing and Communication, they step into the course titled Writing and Reading Across the Disciplines; admittedly a rather bland title. The title only partly describes the focus of the course. (8) The course is the stepping stone to a sequence of courses for students who see themselves as writers and have chosen to major in writing. While students read widely and discuss texts from across disciplines and genres, they build a portfolio of related writing. As well they are able to experiment with their writing and add such writing to their portfolio.

However the substantial focus of the class is on students engaging as "ethnographers of their own situations" with the world outside and with the discipline worlds within the academy. In doing this, as participant observers and researchers of contexts, they become engaged in the issues involved with gathering data and "writing up"--recording data and observations, making decisions about selection of details, about presenting the self as researcher/observer and author, choosing an authorial position and so on. (9)

We talk about their experience of entering the university--a new context in which they are now "professional strangers." So we discuss what happens as people move into new situations and make sense of them--how so much of what we newly understand resides with

us as tacit knowledge; how a challenge for the researcher/ writer and writer/researcher is to reveal the tacit and make it explicit.

"Choose a situation or context (a 'cultural scene') outside the university with which you are not familiar," we suggest. "Spend some time there--half a day, two or three hours. Return to the site if necessary. Observe, take notes, record your impressions, allow words or phrases to flow. Describe it as 'richly' as you can? What can you say about this situation? What can you say about the participants, the language or discourse, the actions and activities? What makes it 'tick'?"

In the first week of study, with words something like this and a lot of discussion, students set out to write a first assignment. This first piece foreshadows a substantial piece of writing based on being a participant observer for a longer period of time in a different context, again outside the university. Students complete that substantial piece in the last half of the semester.

We do not spend time talking in any detail about qualitative research or research from an ethnographic perspective although we introduce some of the key concepts and terms --a first class is not the place for the detailed discussions these topics demand. There is time for this as the semester evolves and as we slowly lead students into a critical experiencing of contexts, texts, and discourses.

For the next three weeks, students huddle in small groups over scraps of paper, notebooks, drafts and first run descriptions. There is opportunity to read passages to a small group and to the whole class, ask questions, seek advice and expound on the experience of the unfamiliar. A rural student (for whom metropolitan bus travel is a new experience) has ridden for hours on busses on one city route observing people and behaviors on a regular run. Other students have been observers of sites or events in the city in which they would not normally spend time--a museum, a writers' forum, a community club, a charity shelter, a shopping precinct, a trash and treasure market, or an old folks' home.

Although this first activity, carried out from the perspective of the participant/observer, cannot claim to be much more than an exercise in description with some tentative forays into critical interpretation and analysis, it establishes early in students' university careers a way of looking at the world on which they can build as they negotiate the geographies of university and workplace.

We talk about the writer as researcher and the researcher as writer. We discuss how in describing, analyzing, and interpreting, the investigator, the ethnographer, the journalist, and the writer observes through particular cultural models or frames. These frames with their implicit values, beliefs and assumptions need to be acknowledged and treated critically. Students explore how choices and decisions about what the writer or researcher includes or excludes are affected by the values and assumptions that underlie his or her theory of the world.

The notion of the classroom as atelier, that is as a place where the expert and the apprentice

can work together sharing experience and expertise, is one we want to establish in this first writing class. Importantly, because the students have carried out the research, including the collection of data, the writing of field notes, students have a particular authority. They know about the contexts they have studied. The teachers do not. Other students do not. However the teachers and other students can be the judicious questioners, the interlocuters, encouraging the critical perspective and raising theoretical and methodological issues as they respond to notes and drafts.

Being professional strangers (10)--researchers and ethnographers of their own situations--in a very deliberate and reflective way is what we hope our students will learn as they step from the first writing class, into other studies and into the world of work and community. This for us is one way that the English classroom can be brought closer to the world: to the community, to the workplace, and to the different contexts students encounter in their lives.

Conclusion

The atelier/ classroom is the site for the arts of discourse, that is the language arts. The English classroom should be the place for properly artisanal activity in which the roles of expert and apprentice are acknowledged, cultivated and shared. It should be a rhetorical site, a dialogic site--in which performance and practice are the strategies for developing understanding, skills, and knowledge. (11)

Therefore the activities should be those of making, writing, re-writing (in the sense of reading and remaking texts as a means for "seeing through language" (Carter and Nash's term), (12) performing, and so on as a means for students and teachers appropriating experiences, texts, ideas, issues of the worlds outside and the worlds inside, and making them their own.

We want to see English curriculum as a place for concentration on the language and discourse practices of contexts beyond the classroom--those practices embodied in texts of all kinds as well as in the understandings and experience of the participants in the classroom (teachers, students and others with whom the class engages). Thus, the world of language, texts of all kinds--indeed an inclusive linguistic heterogeneity of texts, should obtain in the English classroom. However, more than this we want to see ourselves as teachers who encourage different notions of expertise and apprenticeship; recognising that expertise lies in individuals and their experiences, their knowledge, their skills, and their understandings of contexts beyond the school and that apprentice or expert can variously be a role for either teacher or for student.

As bell hooks (13) has written of her own work, her experiences as a teacher cannot be a "blueprint" for others who seek to make their classrooms exciting places for learning. And the stories we told each other are not blueprints--but they did cause us to reflect and analyse our practice. "To teach in varied communities not only our paradigms must shift but also the way we think, write and speak. The engaged voice must never be fixed and absolute but always changing, always evolving in dialogue with a world and itself" says hooks.

It is the engaged voices of students and teachers in an evolving dialogue with the world and with themselves and others, that we suggest the English classroom constructed as atelier sustains.

NOTE: An earlier version of this paper, titled "English and the World," has been published in *English in Australia*. 116, July 1996, pp 3 - 14.

Endnotes

(1) Derrida, Jacques (1978) "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," *Writing and Difference*, London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, pp 278 - 293.

(2) Pennycook, Alastair (1994) *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language*, London and New York: Longman p. 33.

(3) Street, Joanna and Street Brian, (1993), "The Schooling of Literacy," in David Barton and Roz Ivanic Eds. *Writing in the Community*, Written Communication Annual, Vol 6, Newbury Park, CA.: SAGE Publications.

(4) Pennycook outlines these ideas in a final chapter titled "Towards a Critical Pedagogy."

(5) Freadman, Anna (1987) "Anyone for Tennis?" in *The Place of Genre in Learning: Current Debates* Ed. I Reid, Geelong,Victoria: Deakin University Press.

(6) Bakhtin, M. M. (1981) *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, Ed M Holquist; trans. by C.Emerson and M.Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press.

(7) Muchiri, Mary N. ; Mulamba, Nshindi G.; Myers, Greg and Ndoloi, Descorous B. (1995) "Importing Composition: Teaching and Reseaching Academic Writing Beyond North America" *College, Composition and Communication*, Vol 42, No. 2 pp 175 - 198.

(8) A course such Freshman Composition is not common in Australian university. The University of South Australia has a core communication course which all undergraduate BA students take --Communication: Rhetoric and Reasoning. The course referred to in this paper, *Writing and Reading across the Discipline*, is the first course in the major in Professional Writing and Communication. Thus, students in this major will also be studying the core communication unit.

(9) This subject is the first in a sequence of eight in which students are engaged in exploring language, texts, and genres of all kinds, communication and literacies in community and workplace, professional and technical writing, and reading and writing constantly. All subjects are conducted with an emphasis on collaborative activity and group work with students responding to each other's writing as supportive readers and commentators.

(10) Michael Agar's term. Agar, Michael H. (1980) *The Professional Stranger--an informal introduction to ethnography*, New York: Academic Press.

(11) Useful resources here include the following: Andrews, Richard, Ed. (1992) *Rebirth of Rhetoric*, London and New York: Routledge; Andrews, Richard (1995) *Teaching and Learning Argument*, London: Cassell Education; Pope, Rob, (1995) *Textual Intervention--Critical an Creative Strategies for Literary Studies*, London and New York: Routledge; Freedman, Aviva and Peter Medway (1994) *Learning and Teaching Genre*, Portsmouth , New Hampshire:Boynton/Cook Publishers Heinemann; bell hooks (1994) *Teaching to Transgress*, New York: Routledge.

(12) Carter, Ronald, and Walter Nash (1990) *Seeing Through Language--a guide to styles of English writing.* Blackwell, Oxford and Cambridge.

(13) bell hooks (1994) *Teaching to Transgress*, New York: Routledge, p. 11.